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## THE CURIOSITIES OF MY OFFICE.

THERE is something very inexplicable about 'offices.' You never can more than half-persuade people that they are really places of business. A mill, a factory, or a warehouse is thought a spot where time is of value, and into which persons ought not to intrude. An office is never so regarded. The popular notion seems to be, that the announcement of any special business being done there is a mere form, and that offices are really places for the distribution of alms privately, and for the purchase of articles the offer of which anywhere else would be laughable. Everybody walks in and out, accordingly. To any one who had no work to do, and who, consequently, could lay himself wholly out for 'interruptions,' with a view to enjoying them, the thing would be delightfully preposterous. All he would need do is to put a wire-blind in the window, affix a name-plate to the side of the door, and then sit within waiting for those who will come. People odder than any he has ever seen upon the stage or read of in novels, will quickly put their heads in at the doorway. He need be under no fear of their not arriving. If it is an entirely new place, it makes no difference: it does not matter whether it is at the far end of a dark passage, or how high upstairs it may be. If he will only open it as an 'office,' that is enough. It will be found out as easily as sparrows find crumbs of bread. Seedily dressed men, with portfolios under their arms, or with small paper parcels in their hands, will, in five minutes' time, be groping their way along that passage, or gliding up that staircase.

I will give one or two of my own experiences. The first is a very recent one.

'Sir,' said a tall thin man, clad in a worn, very shining garb, suddenly appearing in the room, 'I have ventured to call to lay before you one of the most astonishing inventions of modern times.' They all begin in some such impressive way as that. 'A gas-burner, sir.' I was busy arranging some papers in a stand-up desk in a corner, and having both hands full, with a pen held crossways in my mouth, I was for the moment quite at his mercy. 'Per-

haps, sir, you are not aware that in the case of every kind of burner but this I now shew you, gas gives off a most noxious effluvium, having a peculiarly ruinous effect upon the eyesight.' By this time I had emptied my hands and mouth, and was advancing upon him. Fixing his eyes upon mine, he started back in distressful horror. 'Heaven help us, sir,' he exclaimed, '*how you have suffered already!* Your sight, sir, would not last six months longer. This must not be.'

Before I could say a word or lift a finger to stop him, he rapidly glided past me to the table on which the lamp stood. With a nimbleness which rooted me to the spot in apprehension, he whipped off the shade, then the old burner. In one minute the lamp was a ruin. 'It is a mercy of Providence, sir, that I have happened to call.'

'Stop!' I called. 'Replace everything as it was, instantly.'

'The number of cases of premature blindness,' he calmly proceeded, 'that I have had the gratification of preventing, makes my labour a most pleasant one.'

Thinking he might be deaf, I bawled: 'I don't want your burner; I won't have it. Take it off.' For he was lightly twirling the new one in its place.

'There, sir, you will feel thankful to me as long as you live! The only thing that troubles me in the matter is, I know I am ruining the spectacle-makers.'

'Do you hear?' I asked. 'I shall not pay you for it.'

He struck a very effective attitude. 'Payment! Of what consequence is that? I could not remove that inestimable burner for any amount of money, when the alternative is the ruin of your valuable eyesight. No, sir; your eyes are worth many burners. I make you a present of it willingly. I am a poor man, under heavy travelling expenses, and I have a family in want.' He sighed. 'But duty shall be done. The price is threepence-halfpenny, or three shillings a dozen. I know you will regret this momentary harshness in the long years to come, when you are enjoying the benefits of that

burner. But that is not my affair; though I am sorry to think of it. Good-morning, sir. If at any time, no matter after how long an interval, by some inconceivable accident anything should become out of order in it, you will find the name of the manufacturers stamped on the side. Be good enough to drop a line to their well-known house at Glasgow, and a man will instantly be sent to attend to it.

I was beaten. This offer to send a man from Scotland into the heart of England, after the lapse of years, to put a gratuitously bestowed three-pence-halfpenny gas-burner to rights was too much for me. I had to make a purchase.

Your experience of visitors in an office, however, is not always of so light a character as this. In my younger days, I had one of quite a different sort.

It was past the dusk of a gloomy winter's day. The inner door somewhat abruptly opened; I thought it had been blown open by the wind. But in a moment I was undeceived. A ghostly looking elderly man appeared in the aperture. What I had thought was the noise of a gust of wind, was a heavy groan that had burst from his labouring bosom. It was repeated, as he stood there.

'Don't disturb yourself, sir,' he faltered: 'this is a liberty, I know, but necessity has no choice. I have found this world too hard a place; I can bear it no longer. In a perfect stranger, such as I am, this may seem presumptuous, but every one has a privilege in his last moments. I regret to disturb one who evidently has a feeling heart.' He staggered a pace aside, laying hold of the mantel-piece to steady himself. 'Five shillings would have postponed it indefinitely, but I find that even so small a sum is hopeless. I have ventured to come here, sir, to die;' looking from one to another of two chairs, to see which would best suit his purpose. He selected the one to the left hand, sinking slowly into it, becoming paler every second.

I was horrified. No doubt the man had taken poison. A view of the coroner's inquest started before me; the body would most likely have to remain there upon my premises till the inquiry was held. It was awful. 'Rally yourself,' I said; 'a doctor shall be sent for.'

His voice grew fainter. 'At No. 13 Registered Lodging-house, you will find four small children; I commend them to you. They have no mother; I wish they were more grown up, for your sake.' In a still weaker tone he murmured: 'Five shillings would have saved all this.'

My hair stood on end. Four small children added to the coroner's inquest overwhelmed me. 'Don't die,' I frantically urged; 'I will see what can be done for you.'

'I knew you were a man of a feeling heart,' he softly muttered; 'but it is too late. I only hope that my sudden departure here, under mysterious circumstances, may not bring you into suspicion. The world judges harshly.'

A cold sweat bedewed me. In addition to a coroner's inquest and four orphan children, a charge of murder was possible! 'Here is the five shillings,' I gasped, thrusting two half-crowns into his hand. He revived a little. Opening the corner of one eye, he said: 'Could you make it seven-and-sixpence, and earn my lifelong gratitude?'

About nine months afterwards, no doubt led astray by the fact of my humble premises being approachable by passages leading out of two different streets, the same visitor came there to die again.

I heard his preliminary statement, then I said: 'By all means. I have a friend a doctor, who wishes for a subject on which to try a new surgical experiment. It is very fortunate. Pray, proceed, and don't linger.' He did not. Hastily replacing his hat, he reached the door in two of the most vigorous strides I ever witnessed; but in the doorway he paused. 'It is the last favour I shall ever ask of you,' he tremblingly said, with solemn earnestness gleaming in his eyes; 'but will you kindly tell me *whether I have operated upon you before?*' I assured him that he had. He brightened instantly, as he replied: 'You have relieved my heart, sir. The thing has never yet failed, but I thought it had at last. In that case I should have been a ruined man.' He respectfully bowed, and vanished from the doorway.

These are but samples of the curiosities of my office. Things are continually happening there which make me look on it for the time as a region of sheer fable. People whom you have never seen before, and who perhaps say that their home is in Wales, will step in and lightly ask for loans, to be returned with large interest in two days. You may be asked for a 'recommendation' to the hospital by a man who tells you as he stands there before you that he thinks he has got the small-pox. By the time you have done fumigating after his departure, and just at what ought to be the busiest hour of the day, a broken-down comedian will perhaps present himself, stating that he has been recommended to you as 'a man of taste, who would wish to hear him declaim in private the soliloquies of *Richard III.*' Before you can get a word out, his arm is in the air, and he is half-way through 'Now is the winter of our discontent.' Persons bring for sale wax-flowers, water-colour drawings, pirated engravings, illustrated works, as if they thought you wanted to fit up a drawing-room on the premises. The prices that are asked at every professed trading transaction in an office, shew that there is nothing of ordinary business in the affair. Either you have presented to you the chance of possessing some incalculable prize which would be cheap, if to buy it you sold everything else you had in the world, but for which only sixpence is diffidently asked, or else you are entreated to give the trifling acknowledgment of thirty shillings or so for something which on the face of it is not worth twopence. Then agents wait upon you stating that they have been sent by firms of whom you know not even the names, you having been selected as one of the only twenty-five persons in your town who were to have the favour of subscribing to some venture of theirs. Other persons come with stories of distresses, accidents, persecutions, visitations, which are simply incredible: the things could never really have occurred in a world expressly framed for accidents and distresses. I used to be called on regularly by a man who said he was a small cottager in the suburbs, and who never could keep a cow more than three weeks. At the end of that time, it was always *killed by lightning*. A most neat, cleanly, industrious-looking woman was equally unfortunate with a sewing-machine, on which the support of eleven children and herself depended. Every few weeks it mysteriously fell all to pieces, and she had to go round with the subscription list again.

Anybody who thinks that the world is rather a dull place, being carried on upon strict, hard,

business principles, should open an office. Then, if he will but keep himself quite free from work, and properly enter into the spirit of whatever happens, he will find that life is not yet without its element of broad farce. If, however, he has himself any serious work to do, he had better take it into a mill, a factory, or a warehouse. Offices are incorrigible.

## TROUBLED TIMES IN SPAIN.

## IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.

THERE are eleven weary leagues of sandy road between Madrid and the city of sword-blades; and the diligence being but a crazy affair, and the horses gaunt and worn-out animals, whose next employment would probably be to shew sport to staring thousands in the gore-stained bull-ring, it was dark night when we rumbled into Toledo. The companions of my hot and dusty journey were not very notable: a priest in a portentous hat and cassock smeared with snuff; a cattle-farmer; a peasant-woman with yellow gold ear-rings, and a kirtle of many colours; and a small shopkeeper, with his wife, returning from the capital with an assortment of goods.

A very small shopkeeper, in every sense of the word, he was, short and slight of build, with hay-coloured hair, a long upper lip, and prominent blue eyes that were never at rest. That the little man was a hairdresser, I was not surprised to hear, and indeed he was just such a barber as figures in scores of old, old Spanish stories, garrulous, inquisitive, vain, timid, eager to have a finger in any pie whence might be extracted the plums of profit. He was a Liberal barber too—perhaps the brethren of the brush know too much of the shams and hollowness of a bewigged and bechignoned world to retain much power of veneration—and he ventured to hint at sentiments widely differing from those of his reverence the cura and the *Pemon da Fé* newspaper.

I freely admit that the barber was as prosy, and still more long-winded a bore than the priest, yet I endured his prolixity with exemplary patience, and was rather amused than otherwise to mark the contrast between the wiry little tonsor and his plump wife, who obviously limited her cares to the till and the *puchero*, and left politics and ethics to the department of her diminutive liege lord. On the network of western railways I am afraid poor Jago Perez would not have found in me the much-enduring listener that he evidently prized so highly. But in a semi-oriental country like Spain, he that would travel safely must, according to the Arabic proverb, drape himself in the mantle of patience. In that queer country, where accidents are, so to speak, normal, and men's lives regulated on principles long obsolete among ourselves, it is but the veriest common-sense to provide a friend for the time of need. The mouse can, and very often does, help the lion out of the meshes. Now, there is nothing very leonine, I daresay, in the nature of Robert Thorp, yet the little barber approved himself a very serviceable mouse in this instance, and richly rewarded the good-humoured toleration with which I treated him.

'So your Grace wants to get on quickly, yet without spending the eyes out of your head, to Catalonia,' said the shaver of chins. 'Quite right,

too. Terrible thieves are those postmasters, and the vile postillions are no better than so many turbaned Moors in their greed for silver. Now, as good-luck and my patron of the Pillar—not that I believe in that old story, fit to amuse children, but not credible by a man of, ahem! education—will have it, I know a friend whose beard I shall take off before I sip my chocolate to-morrow, and who purposes to leave Toledo at noon, eastwards, with seventy as gallant horses as ever pranced in a Saracen camp, cavalier.'

On inquiry, it appeared that this opulent customer was a horse-dealer from Andalusia, on his way to sell a number of the fleet-limbed steeds of the south at the great horse-fair of Montjuich, near Barcelona. Ruy Gomez was known in every market from Vigo to Velez Malaga. He was a valiant person and a man of honour—though not an old Christian, as my informant, Perez, was, having the taint of much Arab blood in his veins; but we cannot be all perfect—and would treat me well, and speed me on my way. He was an old acquaintance of the barber's, sponsor to one of his children, and would take at once to a friend of his; and he, Jago Perez, would recommend me warmly to the horse-dealer's good offices, for the sake of the English nation and the memory of Milor Vilainton, and—a consideration. Nor has a gold ounce often been better bestowed than that which I slipped into the barber's itching palm when, on the following morning, his introduction to Don Ruy Gomez y Manillo—he wrote himself no less—had led to a satisfactory arrangement for my travelling with the horse-dealer's swift-moving stock-in-trade.

'Twenty duros, Mr Englishman, for horse-hire, board, and bed—such as it will be, for I warn you we don't sleep on the soft, or eat of the dainty; yet, you see, I am no starveling,' said, with a laugh, jolly Ruy Gomez, who was a dark stout man of forty, burned by the sun until his swarthy face was as tawny as those of his Morisco ancestors. 'I hope, for your own sake, you can ride, for those'—pointing to the drove of handsome horses, all young, and for the most part full of spirit—'are no asses for the use of market-women. However, if you break your bones, it's no fault of mine; and if not, I'll see you safe to the banks of the Llobregat, if every *ratero* in Spain beset the highway. We don't trust altogether to the carabineers to protect us, as you see.'

And indeed Don Ruy and his eight or ten sturdy subordinates were well equipped with gun, sword, and pistol, and had a rough, dare-devil look that few footpads would have disregarded.

It was an admirable opportunity for expeditious yet economical travelling, since the chief of the caravan was in a hurry to reach the fair by the appointed day, and was not disturbed by those fears of not bringing in his four-footed wares in good condition, which would have hampered the movements of an English horse-dealer. The fiery young nags, low in flesh, but full of mettle and hardihood, due to the Arab blood to which they owed their fleet limbs and shapely strength, did wonders in pushing on; while, by changing the saddles from one steed to another, we lightened their toil, and were able to make such marches as would have excited the envy of the most enterprising cavalry officer. Don Ruy was as good as his word. He took right hospitable care of his guest,

and I had nothing to complain of but the unavoidable hardships of the road, and these I was robust enough to regard lightly; so that, when at Montjuich, I hired a calesa to reach Barcelona, it was with some regret that I gave a farewell shake of the hand to bold Ruy Gomez. The rest of the journey, performed as it was on wheels, and on one of the only two carriage-roads that enter Spain from the French side, was easy and uneventful. An imposing force of troops happened to be on its way to the frontier, and I obtained permission to mingle with the lengthy column until I got within sight of the tricoloured posts that marked the limits of the French territory. My papers satisfied the severe inspection of the officials, and I met with no hindrance in traversing the boundary.

Monsieur Dubois, whom I found disconsolately lingering at the Hôtel de la Poste, and drawing uncivil parallels between Paris and Perpignan, readily made over to me, on the production of my credentials, the funds of which he was the bearer. 'Bon voyage,' he said to me at parting, with one of those inimitable Gallic shrugs of which only a Frenchman has the secret. 'I wish you a good journey, Monsieur Thorp, for you are not only a *gentil garçon*, but a man of courage, parbleu! I am no *blanc-bec* myself—fought at Isly under Marshal Bugeaud when I was conscripted for African service, and have made my proofs in the Bois de Boulogne since then—but though Anatole Dubois is no poltroon, he prefers to keep clear of those brigand savages across the border. Do you know that El Mozo's band take all foreigners for spies, and that to fall into their hands is to be tarred and feathered first—ay, and set into a light flame afterwards that roasts the flesh from the bones! Have you heard that another guerrilla captain, Garcia, sent the ears of a provincial counselor to his wife in Pampeluna along with the letter that fixed the price of his ransom, and that, when the money was carried up to the appointed place, rather after date, all they found was the dead body of the poor wretch nailed to a tree! Why, I could tell you fifty such stories, each uglier than the last—cruelties that would sicken even a Bedouin. I tell you frankly, sir, I'd not be in your shoes to have half my patron's profits, and I shall be glad to be back again on the boulevards, where things are, at least, civilised.'

Plainly, Monsieur Dubois had kept his ears pretty widely open to all the flying gossip that in war-time filters across a frontier, and much that he had heard was probably exaggerated; but I had never tried to dissemble from myself that my return would be a work of peril and of difficulty. Once it occurred to me to attempt to re-enter Spain by the broad carriage-road that leads to Barcelona, but this would be to disobey the direct orders of the heads of the house. Besides, the troops had probably been already withdrawn from the frontier-line, and if so, the guerrilla bands would be sure to prowl, like so many hordes of wolves, in the rear of the retiring military, while I might very likely be imprisoned as a Carlist agent bringing supplies of money to the insurgents. I consulted the map carefully, and after some hesitation between two routes, that which traverses the tiny republic of Andorre, and the more picturesque pass called the Port of Venasque, I decided on a more central but less frequented track by which to cross the Pyrenees.

Up to the present time, I had been singularly fortunate, for without visible danger or undue delay, I had achieved one half of my allotted task. All things had gone smoothly with me, and I looked on myself as already a partner in the firm of Stanbury and King, and spun many a pleasant day-dream as to the future distribution of the comfortable income with which Ruth and I, full of hope and joy, were to commence housekeeping. Yet as I turned my face towards the south, boding fears, too shadowy to be put into shape, crept in upon me, and the memory of Ruth's melancholy, of Ruth's apprehensions, arose before me as at the instant of parting. More than once on the road, as we climbed the wild and gloomy sierra of Albarracin, or as the tramp of the many horses resounded over the plains of La Mancha and through the Catalan valleys, had I thought, with more uneasiness than I cared to admit, of Ruth's dream and of her words when I left her.

The point at which I had decided to cross was situated in the ancient county of Foix, and not very remote from the quaint little capital of those turbulent counts, vassals and allies, as the case might be, of the kings of France and Aragon, or of the Moors themselves, and whose name figures so often in medieval history. The French custom-house was reached at last, a whitewashed building of rough stone, and looking, with its iron-barred windows and loopholed wall, as if it were meant to sustain a siege. It stood on a bleak plateau, and near it was a dirty hamlet of half-a-dozen cottages, standing in the midst of some poor patches of potatoes and dreary oats, the last dwellings in France.

'Hum! hum! Thorp—Robert—British subject,' said the chief officer of the douane, as he perused my passport with the aid of his horn-rimmed spectacles; 'age twenty-seven, height—colour of hair. Ay, ay! *visas* and *signalement* are all right;' and so saying he refolded and returned the document. 'I wish I could say as much for you, Monsieur,' he added, with some sympathy in his coarse face; 'it is not over-safe yonder. Well, well, if you must go, you must.' So the other guards of the post opined. 'You'll have a smart walk, yet, to the Spanish frontier,' said a douanier, pointing out the rugged track that led upwards; 'and the first inn—and a dog-kennel it is for a gentleman to put up at—lies two long leagues down the valley; but such as it is, it offers the only accommodation nearer than Rialp or Urgel. Keep your eyes open, Monsieur. The sound of firing reached our ears only yesterday, and for a week past not so much as a smuggler has come across the line.' I thanked him for his information, and pressed on.

Wild as the French side of the frontier had been, that on the Spanish side proved far wilder. The pass, locally called a 'port,' was a mere gash cut, as by the stroke of a giant's sword, through the mighty barrier of mountains. It was narrow, torn by winter torrents, strewn with splintered fragments of rock and water-worn boulders, and darkened by the frown of the beetling cliffs above. There was little vegetation beyond an overgrowth of bushes and rank grass, with some stunted pines. The road was a mere mule-track; and the whole gorge, with its savage ravines, and sudden ascents and descents, its table-lands of rough shingle, and its horrent rocks bending as if to crush the traveller



beneath their toppling weight, was incomparably sterile, desolate, and mournful. From time to time a gust of icy wind rustled the hazel boughs, or the shrill cry of a bird of prey resounded among the rocks, but otherwise there was the stillness of death.

I reached the Spanish custom-house, with its painted posts, red and yellow, standing quite alone on a rising ground, but it was empty and deserted. About a mile or so beyond this building I saw a dismal proof of what civil war brings in its train. By the side of the stony bridle-road had been planted, in a row, four rude gibbets made of young pine-trees, and on these swung, in chains, the half-picked skeletons of four men—malefactors taken red-handed, as I guessed, and hung there *in terrorem* to their accomplices. A grim sight it was in that desert spot; and, as I drew near, my footfall scared a vulture and several carrion-crows from their hideous feast, and with harsh, complaining cry, they flapped their foul wings in the air overhead, and finally perched upon a crag, whence they peered down upon me, impatient for my departure. Some gun-shot distance off I heard the tinkle of bells, and seeing a goat-herd, whose charge were browsing the rank herbage, while their keeper sat smoking his blackened pipe upon a mossy boulder of rock, I accosted him. A wild, uncouth mortal was the goat-herd, dressed in skins, like a less amiable copy of Robinson Crusoe, and tanned by the sun until his complexion was that of an old mahogany dinner-table. He was taciturn, as most mountaineers are, from habit and nature; but he gave me to understand, in a jargon that was but faintly akin to my classical Castilian, that the gibbeted victims had met their doom at the hands of the troops, that he had witnessed the execution, that they had died like good Catholics, and that their last act had been to confide the contents of their purses to the chaplain who accompanied the military, and who promised to hand the dollars and doubloons over to the Bishop of Urgel in payment for masses to be said for their souls.

This was all that I could extract from the goat-herd, who was in truth but a surly fellow, and whose scowl, when he mentioned the soldiers, plainly shewed that his sympathies were not on the side of constituted authority. I tried to glean from him some tidings as to the present condition of the road beyond, but he could not or would not impart any; and not even a gift of some good tobacco could mollify him. I left him then, and continued my route, but not very far, for before I had gone a mile along the dale, a piercing whistle rang forth, issuing apparently from a clump of pine-trees, and simultaneously I beheld, rising over the summit of a flat-topped rock in front of me, two villainous countenances, crowned by battered hats with the true brigand breadth of brim. It scarcely needed the long guns that, an instant later, were levelled at my person, to establish to what profession these obtrusive gentlemen belonged. Again the shrill whistle was heard, and on turning towards the pine-clump, I saw the gleam of three more gun-barrels pointed towards me, and then came the well-known watchword of the Spanish highwaymen: 'Mouth to the dust!'

That I had fallen among thieves was clear; that resistance would be madness was equally so; but I could not without repugnance obey the contemptuous order to lie down on my face, and besides, of

what conceivable use was such a time-honoured ceremony, when the odds were so decisive!

'Señores'—I began, but was cut short by a fierce howl from one of the ruffians among the trees.

'Vaya usted a los infiernos!' bawled the scoundrel, and as he spoke he took as cool an aim at me as if I had been a target, and fired; but there was some scuffling, and I think a comrade purposely struck up his gun, for ping! the shot sang harmlessly overhead. After this warning I did lie down, and in a minute more was dragged to my feet by the robbers, who began rummaging in my knapsack, and turning out the contents of my pockets with the most free-and-easy expeditiousness.

They were six—the men whose prisoner I had become—and one wore a sword and pistols, while the other five had guns, and all wore in their red sashes the long Catalan knife. Yet they were not Catalans, nor, so far as I could guess, were they guerrillas—absolute brigands rather, and from Aragon, to judge by their striped serapés of black and white, and the fashion of their antique sandals, the thongs of which were twisted around their ankles, and adorned by brass and pewter buttons, that jingled as they walked. One of them was very ferocious-looking—a sturdy, evil-eyed fellow, younger than the others, but by far the fiercest. He it was who had fired at me, and his natural brutality led him to treat me more roughly than did the others, shaking me violently by the shoulders, and addressing me as 'Perro Francese!' or 'Dog of a Frenchman!' as he brandished his knife in awkward proximity to my throat. The others, however, were milder of mood; and the man with the sword, who was evidently in some authority, interfered to protect me.

'Let the prisoner be, Diego! Why, confound it, butcher, a man is not a sheep, that you should think yourself always in your slaughter-house in the Calle Viejo. We must keep him for the disposal of El Gran Capitan.'

Sincerely trusting that this illustrious commander, on whose fiat my fate depended, would prove a lenient judge, I held out my hands when desired to do so, and submitted to have my wrists bound together with a scrap of cord. A handkerchief taken from my own pocket was next tied over my eyes, and thus blindfolded, I was placed between two of the bandits, each of whom grasped me by the arm.

'Now march, Señor traveller, and do not spare shoe-leather. We have to walk a goodish bit, I warn you, before we clatter spoons round the soup-kettle at supper,' said the leader, who was a somewhat jocular rogue in his way, and certainly the most humane of the party; and we started.

It was well for me that I was robust and active, for anything like the fatigues of that forced march I had never been subjected to before. Our way lay up the steep hill-sides, now threading our course up the pebbly bed of a dried-up torrent; now pushing through bushes, that lashed my unprotected face as I burst their tangled barrier; and then pursuing some slippery sheep-track with, no doubt, a precipice below and a wall of rock above. The brigands were as agile as so many mountain goats, and their life of ceaseless hardship had injured their limbs to almost any amount of walking; but I, although no bad pedestrian, presently

found my sinews terribly strained by the constant exertion. It is difficult, too, to walk among sharp rocks and loose shale blindfolded and bound, and I should frequently have fallen, had it not been for the gripe of the two strong men who were my custodians; but no rest or breathing-time was allowed me. Diego, the savage butcher, walked behind, and whenever I faltered or stumbled, he stimulated my movements by giving me a smart push between the shoulders with the butt-end of his gun.

By what paths we proceeded, or in which direction, I could not guess, but our course was, as a rule, upwards; and the chill of the mountain air and the force of the breeze became more and more perceptible. Presently my feet sank into something soft and cold, snow slowly melting in some shaded cleft or hollow of the sierra, no doubt. By this I conjectured that we had already reached a great height, and that our wearisome route was nearly at an end, and I was thankful for this, for I was half-fainting with toil and heat, in spite of the rarity of the air which fanned my cheek. At last we stopped, and the bandage was removed from my eyes.

'Drink this; you'll need to clear your throat to answer what the Capitan says to you,' observed the leader of the detachment, filling a tin pannikin with the water that oozed from a small belt of blue ice and indurated snow, a glacier in miniature, close to which we stood. 'It isn't champagne; but a drop of this elixir of mine'—and he uncorked with his teeth a small yellow flask, made of the husk of a dried gourd, and tilted a small quantity of the fiery *aguardiente* that it held into the pure cold water—'will put life into you again. You look pale, but you trudged well.'

I drank, and felt greatly refreshed. I was on a high table-land, where rough rocks, like the bones of an ill-buried giant, protruded from the soil, and where stunted bushes, or pebbly wastes, bordered by banks of snow, wherever there was shelter from the sun, alternated with crisp green grass, enamelled by a thousand wild-flowers. The plateau was of small extent, and evidently at a great elevation. I could distinguish through the gathering twilight quite a panorama of mountain peaks to left and right, crowned by one towering colossus, with a crest of eternal snow, and which I guessed to be the mighty *Maladetta* itself. But what interested me more than any prospect was the sight, within a hundred yards or so, of half-a-dozen red and smoky camp-fires, around which several forms, some of which were in female attire, were busied, apparently in cooking; while sundry groups, wildly picturesque in attitude and garb, were scattered on the grass around. This, doubtless, was the brigands' bivouac. I had just time, as I was hustled along, to remark that some of these knots were in the dress of Aragon, or Navarre, while others were habited in the gaudy Catalan costume, and that all the women, of whom some dozen left off stirring the contents of the capacious soup-kettles to stare at me as I passed, were apparently of Catalonian race, before I was hurried into the presence of the bandit chief.

He lay, wrapped in his cloak—a handsome Portuguese mantle of brown wool and white silk, disposed in alternate stripes, fringed and tasselled with silver bullion, but stained and tarnished—propped on one elbow, as he lazily puffed at the cigarettes which his young Catalan wife, crouched

in Oriental fashion on a cushion at his feet, was deftly manufacturing for his use, with blue rice-paper and golden-leaved tobacco. He thrust back the hat that he wore slouched over his forehead, the better to contemplate the captive.

'A proper prize!' said he, with a disdainful laugh. 'Why, idiots, do you bring such scarecrows here?'

I must confess that the epithet which *El Gran Capitan* had applied to me was more appropriate than polite. A rueful object I was, weary, dishevelled, tattered and bleeding from the thorns and brambles through which I had been forced, and bareheaded, since my hat had been plucked off or knocked away from me in the first scuffle. I was very simply attired, the better to pass for the poor painter that I feigned to be; and now, with streaks of blood and dust on my hands and face, and my pockets turned inside out, I seemed by no means that sort of substantial prisoner who is welcome in a robber-camp.

'Are you a barber, you shabby fellow, or what are you?' roared the captain.

My escort now exhibited my knapsack, with its contents, and the few articles taken from my pockets.

'An artist! By the Flying House of Loretto, if it isn't a dauber of canvas you have trapped this day, instead of a plump canon or a rich *alcalde*!' cried the chief; and, as if the idea had tickled his fancy, he burst into a formidable guffaw.

His young wife, as if encouraged by her lord's good-humour, now clapped her hands in childish mirth.

'An artist!' she said, in bad and broken Castilian. 'What a stroke of luck! *Pepita*, *Juanita*, do you hear—he shall take all our portraits!'

'And charge us nothing!' chimed in a fat little man, who seemed to be the wag of the band.

But the hilarity of the Capitan soon died away, and there was nothing very pleasant in his look as he turned to me.

'Do you know who I am, my chicken?' he asked harshly.

I could but make a humble confession of ignorance.

'I am *Don Balthasar de Castellanos y Garcia*,' said he, watching my face with the malevolent satisfaction of one who glories in the fear that he inspires; 'but they call me *Garcia*, for short.'

The blood ran cold through my veins at this announcement. *Garcia*, the escaped galley-slave, the noted jail-breaker, the murderous villain on whose soul rested the stain, if fame spoke truly, of crimes unnumbered, was notorious for acts of wanton barbarity. If half the direful tales of the man's cruelty that were current had any foundation in fact, I could not, among utter savages, have fallen into more ruthless hands. I must own that the robber captain looked worthy of his reputation. He was a big, burly man, whose scowling ugliness of visage was rendered more repulsive by the deep scar of a sabre-cut that had ploughed his face, gashing the cheek and cleaving the upper lip. The cicatrice, of a dull and livid purple, only reached to the lip, which remained partially cloven, thus giving a peculiar expression of ogreish malignity to the grin which, with *Garcia*, did duty for a smile. His unkempt hair, partially grizzled, hung loose from under his hat, in the gold cord of which was placed a silver crucifix; but the marauder was

close shaven, had a fine ruby glistening on the ring-finger of one unwashed hand, and, to judge by the gold chains that hung round his neck, and the bullion buttons of his frayed suit of green velvet, was a dandy in his way. He spoke, as I noticed, very pure Spanish, and indeed, as I afterwards heard, had been a student at some clerical seminary before his vicious conduct made him an outlaw.

'A spy, eh?' said the captain, eyeing me as a cat contemplates a half-dead mouse. 'Do you know what we do with those gentry? Do you see the fire there? How if I bade my lads tie you up yonder, just where the spit is turning with the roasted kid upon it! A fine carbonado you would make, like the police blood-hound we caught last week, with his instructions in cipher, forsooth—he tried to die mute, fox-fashion, but the fire was too hot, and death too slow in coming, for that!' And again this monster laughed, and several of the men gathered around laughed too, Diego loudest.

Preserving an attitude of respectful composure, as the one least likely to provoke the wild beast in Garcia's nature to break forth, I yet managed to observe the faces of those around. Some of them were as hideous as ignorance and evil passions could make them, but others expressed mere hardihood, often accompanied by a sort of grotesque good-nature. The women in especial, I thought, had countenances not utterly bad. Some of them eyed me, as I fancied, with a kind of compassion; and when the chief, after asking me a few questions as to name and nationality, said: 'So—an Ingles! we'll settle your ransom to-morrow: well, dauber, since you are here, you may as well stop and take our likenesses; and if you make us all very beautiful, *muy bellos*, perhaps you may come to sleep within stone walls once more: I make no promise, mind: so now for the puchero and the wineskins!'—there was another and a more genial outburst of merriment. So far as I could see, the majority of those present felt a species of relief at my having come off, so far, scot-free. This humanised sentiment, which manifested itself in pattings on the back and grins of congratulation, was probably but shallow and short-lived, and by no means inconsistent with an amused interest in my being put to death to slow music, should the chief's whim hereafter exact it, but just then it was not unwelcome.

A Gargantuan repast was the supper that ensued. The appetites of the company, sharpened by exertion and thin air, were only equalled by the profusion of the fare. There were kids and sheep roasted whole, caldrons of soup that might have nourished an *orda* of janizaries, ears of baked maize, and hot chestnuts by the basketful. Nor was liquor lacking, as the presence of a dozen shapeless pig-skins, full of red strong Aragonese wine, and of kegs and jars of coarse brandy, fully proved; while every sort of drinking-vessel, from gold and silver cups stolen from churches, to the most rustic horn, or commonest mug of English crockery, with perhaps 'A present from Gravesend' in faded letters on its white ground, were in requisition. I was myself too tired and hungry to be nice as to diet or table equipage, and certainly the wild beings who sat around me shewed no wish to stint the prisoner; and it seemed to be a kind of amusement to them to ply me with food and strong drink, while half a score of guitars were tinkling, and as many deep voices trollying out rival ditties, towards the close of the entertainment.

Singing, smoking, and story-telling went on for about an hour after all had satisfied their hunger, and then the motley members of the camp disposed themselves to sleep, turning their feet to the fire, and wrapping themselves in cloaks and rugs as a protection against the chill of the night-air in that elevated spot.

I remember how strange was the sensation of lying down to rest in the midst of these queer companions, and how the keen cold air of night seemed gradually to freeze the very marrow of my bones, as a white frost-rime gathered on the grass-blades and heather, and the full clear moon looked down upon my vigil with steel-blue light. I remember, too, that one of the younger women, in pity, gave me a blanket to keep me warm, that Diego came up and snatched it away, asking me scoffingly whether I thought I was at some fine Madrid hotel, and since when French hounds—or English—it was all one—had been so tenderly cherished among gentlemen and Spaniards. And I also recollect that the man who lay beside me, and who told me that he had been a bull-fighter, and shaken a red flag in the arena, and who had the marks of fetters on wrist and ankle, good-naturedly spared me part of the large and cumbersome capote that covered him. It was but a frowsy and flea-infested old cloak, but it was heavy and warm, and I was grateful for the kindness that enabled me to cease shivering and obtain some welcome hours of sleep.

An odd life it was that I led for the next three days in the robber-camp. My wild captors went and came. Parties of them were astir before the dawn, and booty was sometimes brought in, but no captives, while more than once bandits returned baffled and wounded. The time was spent in apathetic indolence or in restless stir, according to the news brought in by scouts. Plenty, however, prevailed in the bivouac, and I was not, as a rule, ill-used. The captain having desired me to mention the quarter to which application for my ransom might be addressed, I had prudently refrained from breathing the names of Stanbury and King. 'The consul of Her Britannic Majesty,' I said, 'might do something for me, as an Englishman in distress. But it would be useless to ask too much, for in England, as in Spain, little account was made of a poor devil like myself.'

'Look here,' said Garcia, with his ogre's grin; 'I'm an old rat, not easy to put off with poisoned cheese. I only half-believe, my fine fellow, that you are an artist, though I'll not deny that you handle your pencil and colours like a workman' (and indeed I had been constantly engaged in taking flattering likenesses of some of the most atrocious visages ever seen out of Newgate); 'but whatever you may be, you'll pay somehow, in coin or with your skin. Your Queen could buy Spain, and never feel the loss of the cash; and unless your consul, or your ambassador, loosens his purse-strings pretty freely, I'll—No; I won't tell you what I'll do—only it shall be something new, something that all the north shall ring with. Write your letter, then; and when my messenger gets back, we will see about the rest.'

Very few of the band betrayed the slightest ill-feeling towards me. Diego, indeed, my enemy from the first, occasioned me much the same sort of annoyance, when a chance presented itself, that a big bullying boy at school delights to inflict on a small and weakly one, and his frequent insolence and

brutality were the severest trials that my temper had to undergo, while two or three of the worst disposed were tempted to follow his example. But the others, especially after they had found out that I could leap and wrestle with the best of them, regarded me with favour, and repeatedly interposed between me and my tormentor.

'Let the Inglesse alone,' they would say; 'he is a good fellow, and more of a man than you are, butcher, for all your frowns and your fingering at the *navaja* in your sash. Tut, lad, does no one wear a knife but yourself, I wonder! The Englishman is going to shew us another trick or two at cards, and then to finish Sancho's picture: why, it's a staring likeness already.'

The women were, after a rough fashion, my patronesses. They were all, as I have said, of Catalan race; and since I, a Monmouthshire boy, had in my childhood had a fair knowledge of the Welsh tongue, I brushed up my recollections of Cambrian gutturals to the best of my power, and was thus able to make myself intelligible in the semi-Celtic dialect of these rude mountaineers. On the whole, I should say that I was a popular prisoner; but so great was Garcia's authority, that I well knew that one command of his would consign me, hopelessly, to the direst doom that his fiendish ingenuity could invent. All this time it must not be supposed that I had forgotten Ruth, dear, soft, loving Ruth, whose boding words often rang in my ears as I sat looking at the ruffianly forms and wild surroundings that hemmed me in; or that I was oblivious of Stanbury and King, or of the fact that my non-arrival at Madrid before the day when the fatal bills of exchange should fall due, would bring ruin and disgrace to the famous old house in which I had hoped to be a partner. Ah! it was sad to remember my old bright day-dreams, now that the season of fruition seemed to be put off for ever.

How strange, too, was it to remember that I—I, Robert Thorp—portrait-painter in ordinary to a horde of banditti, and with the alternative of an extortionate ransom or a cruel death—had actually concealed about my person a great sum of money. The notes of the Bank of France that lay in the belt of soft wash-leather which I wore beneath my clothes, would have been indeed a glorious haul for Messrs Garcia & Co. Beyond turning out my pockets, the brigands had never searched me, so completely did my bearing and my clothes confirm the idea that I was the needy artist that I professed to be. So there I was, in the centre of this greedy band, any member of which, however jovial when in well-fed good-humour, would have cheerfully cut a throat to get at one of the thousand-franc promises to pay of which I was the bearer, and the hidden treasure was as useless to them as it was to myself or to its proper owners. At last a messenger came hurrying in with bad tidings, as I conjectured, for the captain himself instantly set off at the head of four-fifths of the fighting-men, leaving Diego in command of the scanty detachment that was to watch over the women and the baggage of the bivouac.

'I have given orders,' said Garcia grimly, before he went, 'that in case a sudden move becomes necessary, Diego is to "take care" of you, Inglesse. It would be a bad example if an unransomed bird got out of the cage with whole feathers.'

Once in unchecked authority, the natural malig-

nity of Diego's nature soon asserted itself: my rations were reduced to some broken victuals, washed down by snow-water, 'good enough,' as the ruffian said, 'for a heretic swine from over-sea'; and I was no longer allowed the range of the camp, but compelled to pass the night, with no covering but that of a tattered serape, on a ledge of earth overlooking a precipitous descent which no human foot could have scaled, at the giddy verge of the flat-topped mountain on which the camp had been formed.

Early on the following morning, a peasant-boy from the valley brought some intelligence which produced a great deal of stir in the bivouac. There was bustle, confusion, hasty packing, screams from the women, oaths from the men. Clearly the position was about to be abandoned, and such a movement, as I well knew, was fraught with peril to me. Presently, the women, all heavily laden with bundles and cooking utensils, plodded off along the steep and narrow paths, and then Diego, followed by the eight or nine brigands who still lingered, approached me.

'You heard El Capitan's words, my fine Englishman,' said he, with a sneer of unconcealed malice. 'March! is the order, and we cannot be hampered with prisoners. I am come to "take care" of you. Santos! many's the calf I've cared for in the same style;' and he drew his knife and bared his arms.

There was a murmur among the men. 'Come, come, Diego,' said one stout young fellow whose good-will I had won by teaching him the art and mystery of winding up a watch (my own watch, by the way, now tenanting his pocket); 'let the poor devil have a chance. I'll answer for it he shall not give us the slip, and he can foot it nearly as well as we can, so he may as well go with us.'

'And El Capitan's orders! Do I command here to-day, or you, squire from the swine?' retorted the ex-butcher, who really had a love for the exercise of his former profession; and he bade two of the bandits grasp my arms tightly, and prepared to strike.

There arose another mutter of remonstrance from the gang. 'Not so quick, anyway, Señor Lieutenant. Give him half an hour to pray; yes, yes, that can't do any harm—half an hour.' And although Diego demanded of what use were the prayers of a maldicho schismatic, he was obliged to yield a sullen assent; and the whole party left me, and seated themselves under the lee of a rock some yards distant, where, lighting their cigars and wrapped in their striped mantles, they coolly awaited the end of the brief respite that was allowed me.

It would be hard to analyse my own feelings during that half-hour that intervened between the lawless sentence and its ruthless execution. The pity of some benevolent brigand had induced him to leave me two or three cigars, so that, if I preferred to do so, I might solace my last moments with tobacco; and another had silently laid his rosary on the ground beside me. I remember that I strove to pray, to compose my mind, to make ready for the awful chance so near; but my brain was in a whirl, and the loss of life, the loss of Ruth, mingled in my thoughts with the most trivial memories of childish joys and sorrows, and that all these musings were compatible with a sort of mechanical perception of the slightest weather symptoms, and of the most common objects within my vision. A storm was brewing; yes, that was



certain. The sky was no longer of the usual hot green-blue tint, but violet, and darkening as a black haze of cloud came creeping over it like a funeral pall. The wind blew in fierce and short-lived gusts. A drop or two of rain, flat, heavy, rattled on the gravel, and there was an ominous growl of thunder afar off. What an ending to all my hopes, to all my ambitions! Would it hurt much—the death-stroke of the sharp knife which, even then, I could see the volunteer executioner whet upon his sandal? And the money, the French notes, would they ever be found? Most likely not. My corpse would be tossed over into some gully, frequented only by the hill-fox; and when the vultures of the Pyrenees had picked my bones bare, the belt and its contents would have become shapeless pulp. What was that in the valley, far below, something glancing like a river? Not water, no, but steel! I knew the glimmer of bayonets; and through the dust I saw the blue uniforms advancing in column up a narrow ribbon of road. Soldiers! and I was to perish, with rescue so near! Ah! here was the storm! And down came the mountain tempest, with flash on flash, and roll on roll of the artillery of heaven, while hail and rain lashed the hill-sides, and the wind raged and howled in its wildest fury.

My senses had probably been sharpened by the unnatural tension of the nerves, but the brigands' life is one that demands very great keenness of perception, and within ten minutes of the time when I first distinguished the soldiery, a quick cry of alarm told that they too were aware of the unwelcome apparition. The sight of the troops was the signal for my murder.

'Come and hold his hands,' shouted Diego: 'we'll finish with the Englishman, and be off, before yonder beagles of the Queen scent us out.'

And the wretches came hurrying up to conclude their butcher-work, while I sprang to my feet with some vague purpose of resistance; but as I did so, there came a wilder gust of wind than before, and with a thrill of horror, I felt that the ground beneath me was in motion. Yes, it was no fancy. Stones, earth, and bushes, were all torn from their hold, and slipping away, fast and faster still, down the precipice. Lower and lower yet they slid, bearing me helplessly along with them, with very much the sensations of one who feels a trap-door give way beneath his tread; and as I sank, the memory of Ruth's dream came rushing in upon my troubled mind, until I almost doubted if I were awake or the victim of a nightmare. Mingling with the noise of the elemental war, I heard the roar of half-incredulous fury with which the baffled robbers beheld their prey passing away beyond their reach; and I caught a glimpse of their wild forms and savage faces, and then there was nothing to be seen but dust and rolling stones, and the swaying stems of the pine-trees past which I was being borne in that mad rush down the mountain-side; and I tried to grasp at the trees, but failed; and then all grew dark, and I fainted, for my next recollection is that I was lying on the long grass of a little field, in the centre of a chaotic heap of gravel, stones, and bushes that the land-slip had carried down with it, and that the meadow was full of soldiers, while a rubicund regimental surgeon was feeling my pulse, and a woman, a sort of vivandière, was trying to pour a few drops of brandy between my shut teeth. Another good

Samaritan, in a captain's uniform, looked down on me kindly enough.

'No bones broken, doctor? That's right.—Give him another sip from your canteen, Doña Dolores. He's no brigand—an escaped prisoner, more likely. I should say, a foreigner.—Can you find your tongue to tell us who you are, my poor fellow? Anyhow, you are safe.'

I tried to thank him, but fainted afresh.

I have little more to tell. That I reached Madrid in good time, with the belt and its valuable inclosure, and that the French bank-notes enabled Stanbury and King to meet the dreaded bills of exchange with honour and credit—that the heads of the house as honourably kept their promise to raise me to a partnership—that good days and renewed prosperity were in store for the noble old firm, and for myself as the happy husband of darling Ruth, may easily be conjectured. But deep and fervent as was my gratitude for my wonderful preservation from a double death, I have never been fond of discussing the history of those terrible few moments on the mountain-side, or of dwelling on my own feelings while it lasted. Suffice it that the memory of that brief space, fraught as with the agony of a lifetime, long haunted me in the wakeful hours of the night, and that it was not till the course of years had in some degree blunted the force of the impressions, that I was able calmly to record them on paper.

#### THE POPE AT HOME.

WHEN people call on their elderly relations, they are not always acting with a view to snug corners in a will. There is a mournful satisfaction in the sight of a person whom one may be seeing for the last time. Decay is unpleasant; death is ugly. But monopoly is dear to the human mind, and when a thing or a person is gone for ever, those who have seen it have a certain exclusive possession, which others cannot by any subsequent effort or good fortune share with them.

Perhaps it is for reasons like those suggested, that English and Americans, who would not for a moment stoop to the papacy if it were in its pride of power, have of late been making fierce interest to obtain ever so short an audience of a moribund pope at the head of a shaken church, and visit Pio Nono when they are at Rome, while they leave the capital without seeking Victor Emmanuel.

Before leaving England, I called on a friend who knows Rome well, and besought him to tell me what was most worth seeing in Rome. He said: 'See the pope!' This advice was carried out to the letter.

When we reached Rome, we tried three ways of approaching His Holiness. We spoke about our wish in the coffee-room of the hotel, and a lady said that she would manage what we wanted for us. Also, a resident artist whom we knew said that he would speak to a cardinal. Thirdly, we went to the British legation.

The lady went off to a house where she had previously staid, to get the form of a letter in Italian, which we were to send to Monsignor Pacca, the pope's major-domo. The artist promised to write to his cardinal by the evening post. The British legation could not give us assistance, but suggested the name of Mr Jervoise.

Mr Jervoise holds the most mysterious position

in the mysterious city of Rome. While the pope retained his temporal power, it was necessary, perhaps, that a British agent should be formally, or informally, accredited to him. The British constitution did not permit our Queen to deal openly with the court of Rome, so Lord (then Mr) Odo Russell discharged such duties as would have been incumbent on a British minister with as little obtrusiveness as possible. Mr Jervoise succeeded to Mr Russell; but the political changes which both made Rome the capital of the Italian kingdom, and brought to that city a plenipotentiary accredited to its king in the person of Sir Augustus Paget, have made the position of our quasi-ambassador to the pope no longer informal merely, but ridiculous. An envoy who is no envoy, at the court of a sovereign who is not a sovereign, must find it hard to discharge with dignity his delicate rôle of doing nothing.

We went, as directed, to Mr Jervoise, but he was not at home. The lady returned without having been able to find the landlady of her old apartments. The artist discovered that there would not be time to write to the cardinal so as to receive an answer before our departure from Rome. We spent that night rather as the Normans passed the eve of the battle of Hastings, than as the English did. The next morning, there was a gleam of sunshine. The artist had obtained a letter. It was not from a cardinal or to a monsignor. It was from an English lady to an Irish priest. We took this letter to St Peter's, in search of Father O'P——; but Father O'P—— was not in the great cathedral. We sought the father in his lodgings; and after various little difficulties with a bell, we passed into a broad court-yard; and an aged servitor led us along bricked passages and up stone stairs to an ante-room. There he opened an inner door, and through the door we saw Father O'P——, but not exactly in canonicals. The door being hastily closed, the servitor explained, with much ingenuousness, that the holy father did not study in the same attire in which he received visitors, and that we should, therefore, have to wait a few minutes. The cassock, however, was soon donned; and we entered the inner cell, where a table and some wooden chairs were placed on a brick floor, and a few books in a case were guarded by the American stars and stripes.

Father O'P—— was evidently of Irish descent, but spoke the Connecticut dialect of the English language. He read our letter, and said at once that we should have no difficulty in obtaining the audience which we desired. After which assurance we conversed on general topics, and the priest made no secret of his cheerful conviction that there would be civil war in Italy within five months. Without being so rude as to express the horror with which we should regard an occurrence attended with so much bloodshed, we took leave, and calling on Mr Jervoise, found him again to be away from home.

The lady who had gone to her lodgings informed us that our banker would give us a letter to Monsignor Ricci. Mr Jervoise sent us a polite note to explain that he had no official position in Rome, and made certain suggestions. The next day, came a letter from the Vatican.

Monsignor Pacca, major-domo, informed us in this despatch that His Holiness consented to grant to Signore —— and two gentlemen admission to a special audience on the morrow (Wednesday) at

11.30 A.M. A fee of two francs fifty centimes was charged in the hotel bill for the papal lackey who had brought the letter, so that we left Rome with the proud satisfaction of having contributed to the domestic expenses of a great spiritual prince.

Monsignor Pacca's missive further contained printed rules as to dress, &c. We were requested to bring the letter with us to the Vatican, to dress in black with white veils, if we were ladies; and if we were gentlemen, to wear white cravats, black 'frock-coats,' and otherwise black.

As those of our party who availed themselves of this order were two gentlemen, we immediately instituted inquiries as to the meaning of 'frock-coat,' and learned that a dress-coat is the habit usually worn. We were also specially cautioned not to wear gloves.

At last the hour of eleven arrived, and we drove to the Vatican, where the famous Swiss Guard—lanky, ill-shaped men, it must be confessed, in yellow and black trousers, with long dark-blue coats—pointed out our way. Their hideous costume is said, of course, to have been designed by Michael Angelo; and an American traveller gave us the myth which has grown up round its origin. 'I will tell you,' he said, 'the secret history of the uniform of the Swiss Guard. In early days, the brave and famous Swiss Guards were not so sedulous in their attendance to duty as might have been expected. The soldiers of a pope are but men, after all, and just as Knightsbridge Barracks are said to supply the British housemaid with many an Adonis, so, when a Swiss had failed to answer to the roll-call, he was often found to have been detained by some trans-Tiberine Venus. Thereupon, Michael Angelo invented this uniform. It is considered to be the greatest triumph of his genius, and he vindicated its place among the foremost creations of art by the completeness with which it fulfils its purpose. Since this uniform was invented, no Swiss Guard has at any time excited the most transient feeling of admiration in any female breast.'

We reached on foot a great court-yard to which the cardinals' carriages are admitted; and after some trouble in discovering the door, we found ourselves within the private dwelling of His Holiness. Our letter was inspected by a person who appeared to be His Holiness's butler, and we were ushered through several rooms into a splendid chamber hung with tapestry designed by Raphael.

We talked a little to the officer of the guard who was waiting there, and who spoke nothing but Italian. A private soldier whom we afterwards addressed knew no language except German, and it became matter of wonderment to us how the corps could understand the orders of its commanders.

After this, Monsignor Stonor came, and, learning that we were Englishmen, entertained us with a few minutes' conversation; then half-a-dozen other visitors entered the room, some bearing crucifixes and rosaries which were to receive the pope's benediction. A little after twelve there was a stir; some one collected from us our invitations, which were not again returned; a throng of velvet-clad prelates appeared at the door; then at last, surrounded by cardinals and monsignors, these in purple, the cardinals with little caps on, he all in white, Pio Nono sailed in.

All but the heretics knelt. The heretics bowed. A Spaniard, who had brought a cross to be blessed,

knelt down, prostrated himself upon the ground, and rubbed his forehead upon the foot of the pope. All the visitors had been ranged in line; and the pope passed along the line, giving to each person his ringed hand to kiss, the whitest, plumpest little hand it had ever been my fortune to see. He asked us in French if we were Americans, expressed his delight at being answered in Italian, and pronounced the blessing, from which, by a polite but expressive gesture, he seemed to exclude us who were not of the faithful:

*'Benedictio Dei Omnipotentis descendat super vos et maneat semper, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.'*

Then he passed into the next room, and we trooped into the ante-chamber, to see him again as he came out. Ladies, and gentlemen who brought ladies, had been received in the second room; and we met a friend who had escorted, besides an English lady, the daughter of the landlord of his lodgings. Through his landlord's interest with the prior of a convent he had that morning obtained admission.

That is how we saw the pope. No question had been asked about religion, nor, as far as we could ascertain, about social standing. The pope receives constantly, and is said to enjoy the proceeding very much, probably taking as a tribute to his sovereignty what is often nothing more than curiosity. Curiosity is sometimes not tempered with much respect; and we met at Naples two young Englishmen fresh from Eton, who, having received tickets for an audience held on Thursday, left on Wednesday, after returning their invitations, in order not to miss the fine weather. It may sound ungrateful in our mouths to say so, but it seems to us that the easy kind of introduction upon which the pope grants audiences has a tendency to make him what is expressively termed 'too cheap.'

## M A R I A N.

### CHAPTER XVII.

'You see what I want you to do is very simple, Marian,' Neil continued, encouraged by her silence: 'it is only to be silent. I am forced to make up a story which shall induce her to allow me to go away, but I don't ask you to join in it. I've told her that you have refused to marry me now. That's true, at any rate. I've made her promise not to tease you into speaking of me. She is to ask you no questions. You need not name my name after I'm gone, unless you like. And, remember, it is only for a few months at the utmost—more probably for a few weeks—that I ask you to allow yourself to be supposed by her to have engaged yourself to me. I shall have left Holly Bank in two or three days. I promise you to give you no trouble while I am here; I promise, too, to take on myself all the blame of this deception, as perhaps one might call it. When I write to tell Miss Gilmour that I am not to return again, I will write to you too, as if I were offering you your word back again. I may well say that I know I oughtn't to expect such a sacrifice from you, though, to please your aunt, you were willing to make it. Thus she will have no cause to be angry with you, and you will have no trouble and no difficulty. Do you understand?'

'You have told Aunt Sarah that I am engaged to you!'

'Never mind what I've told her. I tell you that all you have to do is to say nothing.—Stay. Before we get home' (they were turning into the Holly Bank avenue), 'let me explain more to you. Remember, the Crawfords and everybody already believe that you are engaged to me. If you will promise me to do as I ask you, I will take care that the Crawfords at anyrate shall know before another week is over that there is no engagement between us. The first thing I do when I leave Holly Bank will be to follow them, to see either Lady Augusta or Miss Crawford, and make them understand the real state of matters. Of course I can do so without letting them suppose for a moment that I come as an ambassador from you. I come on my own account, to correct a false statement which I understand has reached them concerning you and me. The business with Everard Crawford can be arranged before I leave this; I can see him to-morrow. Answer me, Marian; we are almost at the door, and I see her watching for us. Will you be silent? Will you let me speak, and promise not to contradict me?'

'No, no; I will never agree to it!' Marian exclaimed, rousing herself from the amazement with which she had been listening to him. 'Let Aunt Sarah think I am engaged to you again! Never! Besides, to deceive her so, oh, it would be cruel!'

'Cruel? nonsense! And, remember, I don't ask you to say a word to deceive her.'

'But it would be deceiving her all the same. I will never do it, Neil—never!'

'Marian, will you ruin me for the sake of your childish scruples!' he muttered, seizing her almost fiercely by the arm, and making her turn with him again down the avenue. 'For Heaven's sake, listen to me,' he added imploringly: 'this is no time to hesitate. If she begins to suspect me, it's all over with me. Things have come to a crisis with me at last, and I am desperate. Marian, I warn you not to make me more desperate. My last hope is in you. Will you agree to my plan or not? If you agree, you know what I've promised you. If you don't—he set his teeth, and there came almost a savage glare into his black eyes, before which she quailed with terror—'then I've nothing for it but to remain here—ay, and to begin courting you in good earnest. Choose!'

He had been holding her arm, and his grasp tightened on it, perhaps involuntarily. She wrenched herself away from him, and stood facing him; but the effort had cost her all her strength, and she was shaking from head to foot, and not alone with indignation at his violence. She had courage and spirit enough; but a shrinking fear of him had seized her now, as she met the fierce, desperate expression which lowered in his eyes, and as the sudden roughness, amounting almost to brutality, of his manner made her aware that a violent temper might lurk under his usual moderation and gentleness. Another conviction also broke on her. His love for her, if he still loved her, was not, after all, purely disinterested. He was wise enough indeed to see that she would never marry him; but in order to serve his own ends, he would not hesitate to inflict on her the misery of enduring his society, from which, after what had passed, she must needs shrink with repugnance, so that by any means he might continue to humour her aunt.

She waited a moment, that she might steady her

nerves and answer him calmly, though in reality her heart was sinking in dismay at his threat. 'I can never agree to such a plan,' she said at last; 'I can never pretend that I am engaged to you; and if you really do not mean to return to this country, I won't help to deceive Aunt Sarah into supposing that you are only going away for a year.'

She turned, and walked back towards the house as she spoke; and he was obliged to follow her. But just as they were coming in sight of it again, she stopped, pity for the desperate man at her side overcoming her longing to get away from him.

'O Neil!' she said, drawing back a step or two, that her aunt, who, she knew, was watching from a window, might not see them, 'why are you driven to such a scheme as this? If you are in such want of money, why not tell Aunt Sarah everything? She may be angry, but she loves you too well to refuse to help you. Oh, do not try to deceive her: she will forgive you everything but that. Let me speak to her—let me take all the blame on myself of disappointing her in this plan of hers for our marriage. Let me tell her—if you don't like to do it—about your difficulties. After all, she is rich enough to pay all your debts, surely. But let there be no miserable attempt to cheat her: she hasn't deserved that from you!'

'You don't know what you're talking about,' he interrupted with a scornful laugh. 'It's too late for that sort of thing now, Marian. You can be of no use to me but in one way now. I ask you again—will you hold your tongue, or will you go and tell her that I have only been trying to cheat her out of her money again?'

'I shall not tell her that; but I shall not let her suppose for a moment that I have agreed to marry you.'

'And the Crawfords,' said he, after a moment's passionate silence, 'have you thought of them? Remember, if you reject this plan of mine, you are throwing away your only chance of communicating with them. Do you expect me to help you there, when you refuse to do this trifling thing for me?'

'It isn't a trifling thing,' she replied, but her voice faltered. Was she indeed 'throwing away' that one hope of explanation and reconciliation? She thought of Frank in India, and for a moment her resolution wavered.

'Don't deceive yourself,' said Neil with more coolness than he had yet shewn, as if his determination increased in proportion as hers diminished. 'I wish to be honest with you, at all events. If you refuse to engage yourself to me now—though only for a few weeks—recollect you leave me no choice but to remain here and to do all I can, not only to get you to change your mind, and to prove to Aunt Sarah that I'm in earnest, but to confirm, instead of checking the report that we are to be married. It's not a pleasant task you set me; but it's no fault of mine that I'm driven, as you say, to take it up. I would have saved you the annoyance if I could. Decide for yourself: I've given you fair warning. I offer you a fair choice.'

'You are a cruel, dishonourable man!' said Marian, in a low, clear voice, though it was tremulous with agitation; and she walked on.

'That means that your choice is to do without my help?'

'Yes.'

'Very well.' They were again approaching the house, but both were now, in outward appearance, calm enough. No one, seeing the two thus slowly walking on together, could have guessed the rage of baffled calculation in the breast of the one, the anguish of blighted hope in that of the other.

Just as they were entering the house, Neil stopped her. 'Remember: it's understood, then, Marian, that my plans are changed. You have refused to become engaged to me, and I no longer intend to leave Holly Bank. This is what I have to tell your aunt!'

'I will tell her myself.'

'Ah, you think I won't! But you're wrong. She shall know the truth, as far as you are concerned. Do you want to tell her more? Do you want to betray to her what I only trusted to you in confidence—about my debts?'

'I will betray nothing,' said Marian contemptuously, as she saw his half-threatening, half-erring look. 'I will only take care that she knows the truth—about me.' And impatient to escape from him, and to be alone for a few minutes to recover her composure, and think what she was to do, she passed him, and went up-stairs swiftly to her own room, disregarding a call from her aunt, who had come out of the parlour into the lobby to meet them.

'Neil, what's the matter?' said Miss Gilmour, as, instead of attending to her, he too turned away from her, and began slowly to ascend the stairs towards his room.

He did not answer.

'Neil, speak to me this moment. I've been watching for you. Why did you let Marian go up-stairs? Come down here, both of you; I've something to shew you.'

'I can't speak to you just now, Aunt Sarah,' he said gloomily, only half turning his head, and still proceeding up-stairs, but slowly.

'Mercy on me! what's happened to you? What do you mean by behaving like this, both of you?' she exclaimed in an angry fidget.

He stopped, and looking down at her, said hesitatingly: 'Well, come up-stairs to my room. I ought to tell you, and I will.' And with a heavy sigh he went on, and stood waiting for her at his open door.

She seemed uncertain what to do; then going hastily back into the parlour, remained there for a moment. He watched with some anxiety for her reappearance. He wanted to speak to her where they would be safe from an interruption by Marian. As he stood at his door, he glanced into his room, and saw with some surprise that the seemingly useless old bureau which stood in a corner of it had been opened—the sloping lid lay back, and some small drawers and pigeon-holes were exposed for the first time to his view.

'Ha! does she keep her money there, I wonder?' was his first thought; and then he shrugged his shoulders at the absurdity of fancying that the shrewd, careful old woman would trust her money to such an insecure repository.

Just at that moment he heard her step on the stairs, and went out to meet her. He was afraid of her going on to Marian's room. 'Come in here, Aunt Sarah,' he said, and as she entered, he shut the door.

'Well?' she said, breathless with the speed at which she had hobbled up-stairs, and sitting down,



she placed on the table beside her some old-fashioned-looking jewel-cases. 'What's the matter, Neil?'

'Can't you guess what's the matter?' he said bitterly. 'But—don't be angry with her, aunt.'

'Angry with her! With Marian! What's she been doing?'

'She has deceived me; that's all.'

'What do you mean? Deceived you?'

'I told you she was willing to marry me. Well, it seems I was all wrong. She's not willing—she says she never was willing—and I've been a fool—and'— He threw himself into a chair, and covered his face.

'Neil, Neil!' said Miss Gilmour, getting up and coming to him. 'Hush! don't go on like that!'

He was sobbing, and she who had never seen him absolutely break down before, bent over him, laying her feeble trembling old hand on his shoulder, and crooning over him old, long-forgotten epithets that she used to lavish on him in his childhood. 'Don't do that, Neil, my bonnie laddie. Speak to me; tell me about it, dearie.'

He stood up at last, as if he wished, and in truth he did wish, to prevent her observing his emotion too narrowly; and going as far away from her as he could, walked up and down the room, telling her, in broken, indistinct sentences, his story.

She listened at first with agitation and sympathy, and expressions of wrath against Marian, which he tried to check. But by degrees her own emotion cooled down. He saw with uneasiness that the softened indulgent mood was passing away, and he made a desperate attempt to profit by it before it vanished.

'Aunt Sarah, I've told you everything,' he said, coming up to her again, perhaps with rather incautious suddenness, for as she looked at him she wondered to see in his eyes so little sign of his past agitation. 'Tell me what I am to do. Is it any use, do you think, for me to stay here and try to get her to care for me yet? If you wish it, I'll stay.'

Miss Gilmour was silent for a minute, a very anxious minute to him.

'I thought you told me,' she said at last slowly, 'that if you didn't go out to Australia with this man for a year, you would have to pay him some hundreds of pounds?'

'So I did.'

'Then if you don't go, I should have to pay the money, I suppose?'

'Somebody must pay it. But I don't ask you to do that. I'll—I'll go away, and work my own way, sooner than put you to this cost. All the favour I will ask of you—all I shall ever expect you to do for me will be to—to'—

'Well?'

'To lend me—something to start with again,' he said, sheepishly enough, for, after all, he was no practised villain and dissembler, and her cool, dry manner abashed him. Possibly, also, he was not quite insensible to the meanness with which he had tried to work on her sympathies, now that the success of his artifice began to look doubtful.

'To lend you something. How much?'

'You said you would let me have five thousand pounds.'

'Five thousand pounds. Yes—when Marian was engaged to you.'

'I have done my utmost, Aunt Sarah, to make her consent to an engagement.'

'Perhaps you have.' Miss Gilmour's voice was drier than ever. A disagreeable suspicion was making her repent the foolish, fond words she had been murmuring over him a little while ago.

'Then you don't blame me because I haven't succeeded?'

'I'm not saying I blame anybody. But if you mean—am I going to give you five thousand pounds without more ado, whether she agrees to marry you or not—then I say I'll not do it. This is what I'll do—I'll pay the money you owe to that man.'

'Thank you!' said Neil eagerly. 'I ask no more—at present. If you will let me have, say three hundred pounds at once.'

'I'll pay him the money, whatever it is,' she resumed, without attending to his interruption, 'and you shall be free to remain here. Give me his name and address, and I'll send a note to Mr Stronach to let him have the money at once.'

'Mr Stronach!' said Neil, unable to conceal his chagrin. Mr Stronach was Miss Gilmour's lawyer, whom, however, she employed very rarely. That she should propose to employ him now, argued a certain amount of misgiving on her part, which Neil did not like; but on this very account he was afraid of opposing the arrangement.

'Let Mr Stronach forward the money, if you please,' he said sullenly. 'But you need not trouble yourself to write to him about it to-night; to-morrow, any day this week, will do as well.'

Miss Gilmour was thrown off her guard; her suspicion was quieted by the very display of impatient temper which was too real to seem feigned.

'I don't mind taking trouble for you, Neil, nor putting myself to expense either—only, I like to see my way.' She took up from the table, as she spoke, the cases which had been lying on it, and went to the bureau. But as she was about to replace them in the drawer from which she had taken them, either an inclination to make peace with him, or her half-childish pride in the jewels which she treasured so fondly, made her, after some fumbling with the cases, which he watched with impatience, for he wanted to be left alone, call to him to come and look at them.

'I promised to shew you my jewels some day, and I haven't had time since we came home. Look here! Don't you remember these emeralds now? I took them down-stairs to shew them to you and Marian.'

'Yes, they're very pretty,' said Neil carelessly, for he was still too vexed and mortified to refrain from shewing his ill humour.

'Pretty! Is that all you think of them? Let me tell you these emeralds are worth, as I've been told, hundreds and hundreds of pounds—not to speak of the diamonds in the setting. Well, maybe Marian will think more of them.' She snapped the cases together angrily, and thrust them into the drawer. Neil's indifference reminded her of Mrs Everard Crawford's uncomplimentary criticisms on the family heirlooms; and, in her annoyance at the reminiscence, and her present displeasure, her hands shook so, as she tried to raise the heavy mahogany flap of the bureau, that he had to assist her with it. She seemed, however, to be rather irritated than mollified by his intervention, and almost before he had time to shut the lid down,

she had impatiently turned the key in the lock. Then putting the bunch of keys in her pocket, and still frowning, she left the room without saying another word to him.

'And now,' said he to himself when he was alone, 'the next question is, how am I to manage that old fox of a lawyer?'

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

The following two or three days gave Marian a sufficient foretaste of the life to which she was now condemned. With her aunt she was in the deepest disgrace; for however dissatisfied Miss Gilmour might be with Neil, she did not hesitate to make the more gentle-tempered of the two culprits the principal victim of her displeasure. With Neil, indeed, she shewed rather an inclination to make friends, and though jealously watchful of him in some respects, scarcely willing to let him stir out of the house, even to walk into Whiteford, and keeping him almost entirely destitute even of the pocket-money she used to take pleasure in giving him, she was yet whimsically anxious to make his imprisonment at Holly Bank, as it might be called, as comfortable to him as possible. The weather was bitterly cold, the snowstorm having ended in a severe frost, and at Holly Bank a cold winter was a thing to be dreaded. Marian had never yet become hardened to her winter miseries, though she knew it was no use to complain of them. This year, either because the season was unusually hard, or because she had less spirit to bear the actual physical suffering inflicted on her by her aunt's penuriousness, and contempt for what she called new-fashioned habits, she seemed to feel it more keenly than ever. She was ashamed of her want of courage, angry with herself for caring about such trifles when her heart was so full of more enduring sorrows. But the deadly frost seemed to benumb strength and spirit too; and indignant though she was at her weakness, she would sit in her fireless bedroom, where the window-panes were mere opaque sheets of frosted glass, and the water stood in icy lumps in the jug, and cry like a child over the chilblains which disfigured her fingers, and the bitter cold which kept her awake at night.

But the worst of it all to her was, that this stress of weather drove her, in spite of herself, into a sort of defensive alliance with Neil. He, too, suffered from the cold, but for him there was no lack of provision against it. A good fire was kept up for him in the parlour, and even in his own room, as if he had still been an invalid, and he had the undisputed privilege of ordering more coals. Miss Gilmour herself rather disliked the temperature at which her sitting-room was kept, but rather than interfere with his comfort, she would remain out of it. Thus, when Marian would creep down, benumbed and miserable, from her own dreary room, to which she had retreated to keep out of his way, she would find him in solitary possession of the only habitable corner of the house, and be forced to share it with him, if she did not design to aggravate her troubles by a serious illness. As for air and exercise, she could only obtain them under the constant terror of finding him haunting her steps; for he plainly shewed his intention of keeping his word to her, and she felt she had no better defence against that odious love-making than

her own resolution not to listen for a moment to his arguments and his promises. Yet these arguments and promises were sometimes too subtly urged for her to be entirely deaf to them. She remained firm. At last she tried to silence him by threatening to reveal to her aunt the base scheme he had formed for cheating her out of the promised sum of money. He laughed at her threat; and she too felt, as she saw him steadily, if gradually recovering the influence with Miss Gilmour which seemed lately to have been shaken, that he could afford to disregard her feeble menace, even if she had chosen to put it into effect.

'It's no use your holding out as you're doing, Marian,' he said, with a half-pitying, half-triumphant air that made her blood boil, even while his confident tone dismayed her. 'I'm not in such a hurry to get away from this as I was a little while ago. I've arranged things, and now I can contrive to remain here easily enough for some months longer at anyrate. Aunt Sarah and I are becoming the best of friends again. She's obstinate on one point still, however: she insists on our engagement. She knows I am doing all I can to bring it about, but she's losing patience with you. Take my advice; accept me without more fuss. Pshaw! All the world says you've accepted me already. You're afraid of the shadow,' he added significantly; 'but you forget that the substance, the real engagement, is believed in all the time.'

Marian grew pale. 'Yes, I've been forgetting that too much,' she said quietly. 'Thank you for reminding me.' She left him before he could reply.

'How are you getting on, Neil?' said Miss Gilmour, half crossly as usual, when she was next alone with him. And he said exultingly: 'I'm getting on very well, Aunt Sarah: she's coming round.'

#### THE MONTH:

##### SCIENCE AND ARTS.

AMONG scientific novelties we hear of improvements in telegraphy, by which from four hundred to six hundred words can be flashed along the wires in a minute—Of a chemical preparation of tar, which, at a very trifling cost, adds enormously to the insulating properties of gutta-percha, and consequently facilitates the transmission of messages. From this it may be inferred that in the course of the next few years the achievements of telegraphy will border on the wonderful—Of magneto-electricity for purposes of illumination, to be tried on a grand scale on the clock-tower of the Houses of Parliament, where the machine will be driven by a four-horse power steam-engine. This is Mons. Gramme's invention applied on a great scale; but the ingenious Frenchman employs his machine on a small scale to do all the work in what are called the 'galvano-plastic arts'; that is, electro-plating and such-like. Instead of batteries and acids and alkalis, which involve expense and trouble, manufacturers may henceforth use Gramme's magneto-electric machine with obvious advantage. Whieldon and Cooke, 190 Westminster Bridge Road, will supply information on the subject.—Further, we hear of magnetism employed in the electrolysis (that is, the chemical decomposition) of water: a remarkable experiment, for when the current is going, the water is seen to rotate round the pole of the magnet, and to change

its direction with change of polarisation.—Of Mr Bessemer's apparatus for firing guns at sea: attached to the gun is a toothed quadrant, which works with the rolling of the ship, and at the critical moment acts upon a lever, and an electrical contrivance that fires the gun.

The Iron and Steel Institute have held a meeting in London, where they gave a good account of their progress; and Mr T. R. Crampton, C.E. shewed that the important problem—How to utilise coal-dust? had been satisfactorily solved. A puddling furnace has been set up at Woolwich. When this furnace is in operation, a stream of air and coal-dust is blown in; the combustion is perfect; there is no smoke; and the iron is of much better quality than that puddled in the ordinary way. The same method is applicable to all kinds of furnaces, and thus it would appear at last that there will no longer be what is called 'waste coal.' The heaps of 'waste' in the mining districts will now fetch a good price; and owners of steamships will find that powdered coal is better than lumps. Mr Crampton remarked, in concluding his discourse, that 'his main object was to subserve higher purposes by effectually utilising refuse coal;' and that he hoped to see the day when, on the departure of the great mail-steamers, 'the stream of fuel would be turned on at Southampton, and not turned off till the vessel reached India.'

Another important fact made known to the meeting was a contrivance by which the ponderous rollers of a rolling-mill can be made to reverse their direction without shock and without stopping the engine. Thus, the heaviest masses of iron may be rolled backward and forward at pleasure—an advantage which manufacturers will know how to appreciate. The summer meeting of the Institute is to be held at Liège; and in that busy town they will perhaps learn something from the Belgians.

We have more than once made known that stone in quarries and coal in mines could be 'got' out by machinery with great economy of time and labour. Even advantageous improvements, it seems, cannot be adopted all at once; but a beginning has been made, and for some months past a machine worked by compressed air has cut out the coal in a colliery near Glasgow. This machine is to be introduced into the mines of Northumberland and Durham; and should it pass into general use, the mines would become less unwholesome than at present, through the escape of the compressed air, and the greater part of the coal-miners would have to find some other employment. There are three hundred and sixty thousand men and boys employed in British coal-mines; not more than sixty thousand will be wanted when every mine has its machine. Another advantage is the avoidance of the waste which takes place where coal is dug by hand; this waste at present amounts to about fifteen million tons a year. With the machine, the waste would not be more than four per cent. of the whole quantity of coal produced. These particulars become exceedingly impressive when taken in connection with the foregoing brief account of the furnace for burning coal-dust.

One of the diamond rock-boring machines was exhibited at the conversazione of the Royal Society last month. When at work it rotates two hundred and twenty times in a minute. It may be described

generally as a tubular drill about three inches diameter, with four or five small black diamonds fixed in the head. Incredible as it may appear, these black specks, when driven by a steam-engine, cut their way through glass or through the hardest rocks with surprising rapidity.—At the same place were exhibited specimens of the nine-inch cores brought up by the exploratory boring through the Wealden beds, near Battle, Sussex. For scientific purposes geologists desire to know what are the strata in that part of England, and this boring is a pursuit of knowledge; under difficulties, too. Among its first-fruits is the discovery of a thick deposit of gypsum, which is commercially valuable.

Mr Teale, of Manchester, has invented a new safety-lamp for the use of miners. It gives double the light of the lamp at present in use, at one half of the cost; and if the miner attempts to tamper with it, the light at once goes out. The oil which feeds the light is contained in a sponge, consequently there can be no spilling of oil by an upset. We learn too that in the Harecastle collieries, a new lock for safety-lamps has been in use for about three years. It is a lock which locks itself, but can be unlocked only by a powerful magnet. This magnet is kept in a strong box under charge of a trustworthy keeper; and thus it would be impossible for a miner to open his lamp, and incur the danger of an explosion, while at work.

A mechanical engineer at St Louis shews that polarised light can be employed with advantage to shew the effect of strain or pressure during experiments on the strength of iron. The ordinary polariser and analyser are used. Any part of a beam or bar under test which has no strain will remain dark under all the revolutions of the analyser; but as the pressure is applied, the appearance of light marks the beginning of distortion. Increase of pressure brings out red and yellow; and thus all degrees of strain, of shifting of what engineers call the 'neutral axis,' and of fracture, can be studied and accurately noted by a simple optical instrument.

A new form of testing-machine has been constructed in the United States for testing the tensile strength of bridge-bolts, chains, ropes, whether of metal or hemp, in any length, and boiler-plates. And it is so arranged as to test the resistance of metal or stone by crushing, which will be recognised as important by practical men, who know that a compression test is often as essential as a pulling test. Transverse strain and torsion in any material can also be tested by this new machine, which is so contrived that the weighing levers are at one end, and the power, consisting of a hydraulic pump and jack that run upon wheels, at the other. A one-pound weight placed in the disk suspended from the beam will apply a strain of one thousand pounds. From the description, it appears that the machine is in equipoise before the specimen is in place, and is so nicely adjusted, that when a strain of fifty or seventy-five tons is being made, a half-ounce weight will immediately turn the beam, and break the specimen if the necessary strain has been reached. The manufacturers are Riehle Brothers of Philadelphia.

In Philadelphia, last year, there were more than six hundred fires, and fifty-nine of these arose from explosion of lamps in which petroleum oil was burned, and about one hundred deaths occurred in consequence. It is estimated that the number of

deaths throughout the United States in 1872 from explosions of lamps was 5250, and that twenty thousand persons were maimed or otherwise injured. From this it is evident that an invention is wanted which shall render petroleum a safe article of combustion.—Mr Silber, whose improved burner for oil-lamps we noticed in a recent *Month*, states, that before many months are over he will make the burning of petroleum in lamps a perfectly safe process. By the way, the beauty and brilliance of Mr Silber's oil-light have been demonstrated on a magnificent scale at Burlington House by Messrs Gardner and Son. Chemists say, that with the Silber burner there is the nearest approach yet made to perfect combustion.

In the oil-bearing regions of the United States, some of the wells cease to yield oil, and pour out gas, and in some places wells have been dug for only, and we are told of towns, factories, and gas dwelling-houses which are lit and heated by this natural gas. A gas-well 800 feet deep was sunk in Ohio in 1866, and gas has been rushing from it ever since with such velocity through a 2½-inch tube, that its roar can be heard far off. An adjoining well, which has never been tubed, fills with water, and every minute there is so powerful a rush of water from below that the water is forced up to a height of 120 feet, after the manner of an intermittent geyser. It is estimated that the outpour of gas from the group of wells here referred to is sufficient to light a large city; and it may fairly be reckoned among national mineral resources. At some of the wells, as we are informed, the gas is burnt and converted into lampblack.

Among elements of national prosperity, health may be regarded as the foremost; and it follows that to shew how disease is occasioned, and how it may be avoided, are deserving of all attention. This is done from time to time by the medical officers of the government; and in a recent Report we find that a certain kind of fever is kept alive and propagated by water, and by the milkman. There is no room for doubt that enteric fever, otherwise known as gastric or typhoid fever, is produced by foul water, that is, water into which a sewer or a cess-pool leaks. It is as easy of proof as that an acid and an alkali effervesce. Unfortunately, there are too many places where this state of things prevails: it is found in picturesque country villages, as well as in the filthy quarters of overcrowded towns. Wherever people drink water tainted by human excreta, there enteric fever is sure to appear and to destroy. The true remedy, therefore, is a supply of pure water. As regards the milkman, mentioned above, he is accustomed to pump water into the milk he sells: the water is perhaps contaminated by sewage, and he carries from house to house the seeds of fever in his pail. The law against adulteration is now sharp and severe. Is no one to be made responsible for adulterated water?

The question of constant water-supply in London has led to many theories and schemes for cistern fittings; but as yet, none has been produced which equals the 'Waste-not cistern apparatus,' invented by Messrs Tylor and Sons, 2 Newgate Street. This costs but a few shillings, can be fitted to any cistern, and is so constructed, that on opening the valve, a fixed quantity of water is discharged, instead of the unlimited flow by which mischievous or careless people waste more than they consume.

An inventor has demonstrated that it is not necessary to groove a rifle-barrel along its whole length in order to get good results in shooting. About four inches at the muzzle are grooved; all the rest is smooth, by which the initial velocity of the bullet is much greater than in a barrel grooved from breech to muzzle, and the flight of the bullet is more direct, or, as shooters say, it has a flatter trajectory. It is found in practice that the few inches of grooving at the muzzle are quite sufficient to set the bullet spinning.

The Scottish Meteorological Society carry on their work with spirit; they are turning their attention to the blights which are often carried from one country to another long distances through the air: they notice that storms are often preceded by a great diminution of daylight, and they suggest that photometric observations might be useful as indicative of storms. One of their members has invented a rain-gauge for use on shipboard; and in a recent number of their *Journal* they publish instructive particulars about the prevailing winds of Scotland. From these we learn that in the neighbourhood of Iceland, atmospheric pressure is lower than in surrounding regions; and to this is due the prevalence of W.S.W. winds in Scotland. It is owing to the same low pressure that the general track of the storms of Western Europe passes between Iceland and Farö in their course from east to west. The *Journal* contains also a list of places in Scotland in which north winds, north-east winds, and east winds scarcely ever blow. These should be pleasant places to live in when the grim blasts are howling elsewhere.

The Swiss government has published meteorological Reports about the rainfall of Switzerland, which contain particulars of much interest to meteorologists everywhere, and especially to those of Western Europe. The average rainfall in the year for the whole of Switzerland is about four feet. Contrary to what has been observed in our own Lake district, the average fall at all the stations below 1200 metres in height is somewhat more than at those at a higher elevation. But there are stations where the quantity is almost incredible, the most noteworthy being the Bernardin, as shewn by a fall of more than 6½ feet of rain in 1871. The Grimsel ranks next in order, and almost equals the Bernardin. It is supposed that when the returns for 1872 are made up, the Bernardin will shew a rainfall of twenty feet at least.

#### O R I O N.

O NIGHT ! I gaze upon thy starry fire,  
Gemming Orion's Atlantean shape.  
But wherefore do my wayward thoughts escape,  
Along Association's subtle wire,  
To a lone churchyard in a western shire,  
And grave in it inclosed with iron rail ?  
Listen ! and I will tell the touching tale  
In the soft numbers of the Muse's lyre.  
A friend—such as all loving hearts desire—  
One day sat by me on our college form ;  
We read about Orion, night, and storm ;  
But my poor friend began to pale and tire,  
And he went home and died !—Alas, my friend,  
Orion still reminds me of thy tragic end !

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